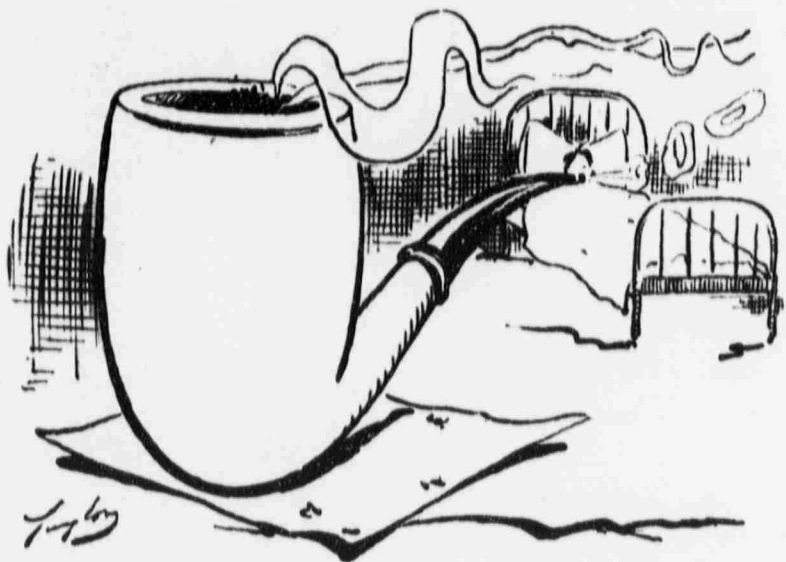


# I'VE BEEN THINKING

By Charles Battle Loomis

The other day I had been going on at a pretty rapid rate, denouncing the ill-gotten money of the American "robber barons," saying that I would rather die poor but honest than be as rich as—I can't think of his name, but he is respected by the unthinking everywhere.



Suddenly a man who is known from end to end of the world came up to me—yes, to me, and asked me how I was getting along.

Why, I almost gasped for breath. He is worth millions, and I wondered how he could have heard of me, who owe the dollar and a quarter that I call my own.

Now, if ever anybody made his money sinfully he did. He stands high up among the Standard Oil men and I yield to no one in contempt for his methods, although I will admit that his manners are perfect and he certainly seems to know people outside of his world.

He congratulated me on a story of mine he had read. It was one satirizing plutocrats, but he had missed the satire and had taken it as a compliment.

Said he, "I wish to help people in all the arts. I wish to seek out artists and give them rolls of money. I want to find struggling musicians and help them to an education. And I particularly want to give you a house and lot and some shares of railroad stock that will yield you an income of ten thousand dollars a year."

Well, you may imagine I did not know what to do. However the man may have come by his money, he was certainly moved by kindly feelings in wishing to share with me.

I hesitated and hemmed and hawed and thought of my family and of the good uses to which I might put the money.

And then I remembered that my ancestors were Puritans, and that not one of them in all the nine generations ever told a lie or did anything wrong in any way whatsoever, and I took a long breath and said, "Thy money perish with thee. I'll have none of it."

And then I woke up.

If you do not care to wreck your bark on the breakers of divorce, see to it that Love stands at the tiller when you go aboard.

"Love suffereth long and is kind." A very pleasant fellow to have at the helm, you must admit.

When you go down to the pier at which the little boat is moored, you and she, be sure to it that Love, the dear little fellow, is standing somewhere near, and then do you call him up and say: "I entrust my bark to your keeping. We want to sail as long as the boat lasts and we want you to guide us among pleasant places. If storms come up we do not wish



to evade them, only see to it that we weather all gales; and whatever you do, see to it that we do not strike on the rock of divorce."

And Love will shake his curly head and say with a merry laugh:

"I have acted as helmsman to many a couple, but never yet have I struck on the rock of divorce. Now, over there is a well-dressed sailor named Gold. His boat is bigger than this and is furnished better,

but if I do say it, he cannot mind helm as well as I, for many and many a couple has he spilled out on either side of the rock of divorce. Are you ready, sir? Shall I cast off?

"Cast off, my hearty," say you. "We are in for a long and perhaps an adventurous voyage, but with you and with her on board I'll be bound it will be a happy one."

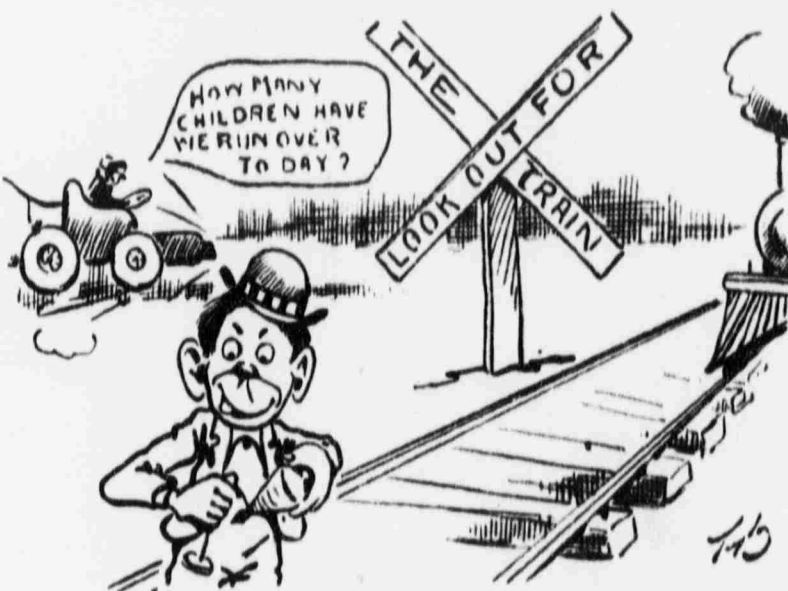
All of which is a pretty little allegory, and I made it up out of my own little head.

And it's true, every word of it.

What would we have thought of that mother who thirty, or even fifteen years ago, allowed her children to play tag and spin tops on the railroad track of a trunk line? We would have called her lacking in common sense. But the world moves, and although mothers still object to their children playing tag and spinning tops on railroad tracks, steam cars are now allowed on our highways and byways, and whereas the railroad train runs on a schedule, the modern steam car and its brothers, the electric car and the gasoline motor, run at full speed under no schedule, and they run where children most do congregate.

And so used do we become to dangers that we mothers—I speak as a man—sit at our bedroom windows and calmly continue our sewing as we watch Willy elude a machine running at twenty miles an hour, and Jenny calmly step aside to allow the passage of a road-devouring monster, painted red and "chugging" in a manner unknown to our fathers, who did not even know what "chugging" was.

Now, when airships are common and they begin to fall from the sky, as they most certainly will in the hands of inexperienced aeronauts, the careful mother will at first make her children play in the house or in some protected playground, but after awhile she will realize that this world is meant to be lived in, danger or no danger, and she will merely say: "Willy, if you hear a strange noise overhead



look up and dodge or I can't let you play out of doors."

And in learning to dodge a falling airship and at the same time keep out of the path of a hurtling motorcar, the children of the future will get to be so nimble that the race as a whole will be improved. It will be a fast race, in fact.

Which shows that everything is for the best.

"I inclose an interesting clipping that will appeal especially to you. Let me know what you think of it."

And then she doesn't inclose it and the recipient of her letter vainly hunts for it.

The non-inclosing habit follows the postal route all over the world.

It can be carried to maddening extremes, as when the young man who is stranded in the West receives a loving letter from his mother, in which, after telling him all the little inconsequences of his native village, she says: "I did not know what to get you for your birthday and so inclose a five-dollar bill."

Imagine the feelings of the poor tenderfoot, down to his last cent, when he finds that she has forgotten the inclosure. If only she had forgotten the village gossip and remembered the thing that would have made that particular letter memorable.

In the same class as the non-inclosers are those who say, "Of course, George will have written you about the mysterious happenings in the house of Cynthia Alendale. How do you account for them?"

It is more than likely that if George has written at all he will have said: "I suppose that Emma has told you all about the blood-curdling affair at Cynthia Alendale's, so I will not waste your time by telling you about it. But wasn't it awful? What are we coming to?"

If only George and Emma had assumed that the other had not told a single thing about the interesting affair! Here and there are people who hate to

receive letters, but most of us are human (Heaven he praised!) and so in writing put in all the human touches you can think of, and don't assume that "the other fellow" has written all the interesting news, because you may depend upon it he hasn't.



And remember to put in the inclosure even if you forget to post the letter containing it.

In the fiftieth year of the life of Jabez Holtite, the multi-millionaire, the thought came to him that it might be good for his soul if he gave away in charity some of the money that he had reached out and picked up right and left since his "pickers and stealers" had been strong enough to clutch.

Jabez had never troubled churches by his presence and he did not know that there is an injunction that you let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth.

And yet in acquiring his wealth it must be said that he had unwittingly carried out the spirit of that precept, for many of the doings of his right hand were of so questionable a nature that he had kept his left hand in darkness for very shame. But (to speak fair) if the right hand had known of some of the deeds of the left hand it would have blushed. Oh, they were a good pair of hands, those hands of the multi-millionaire! Ever faithful to his material interests had they been, but now he was afraid that his chance of heaven would be meager if they did not together act as almoners—of course, with a proper "barker" before them to trumpet forth their good deeds to an admiring world.

So Jabez Holtite sent for a reporter and said to him: "What is the best way to let the world know that I am not merely an acquirer of wealth, but that all my money-getting has had but one object, the final giving away of all my goods to the poor?"

The reporter said, "You might advertise on our financial page to this effect: 'Jabez Holtite, the millionaire, wishes to divide his wealth among the really deserving. Address him at the postoffice, naming amount desired and giving your oath to requite him by spreading abroad the good report of his generosity.'"

Jabez looked troubled. "I am afraid that would be too widespread in its effect," said he. "I expect to live many years, and did not intend to give you the impression that I wished to divest myself of my means as a man divests himself of his shirt—at once. I thought I would be willing to give something like a thousand dollars to some well-known institution, and I am willing—perfectly willing—to talk about it to the extent of a column in your paper."

The reporter grew an inch. "Mr. Holtite," said



he, "if you are actually going to give a thousand dollars to any sort of charitable institution, or even to a college, and will promise to let no other newspaper hear of it before we have a chance to give it publicity, we will be glad to devote our whole first page to it because it will be in the nature of abso-

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